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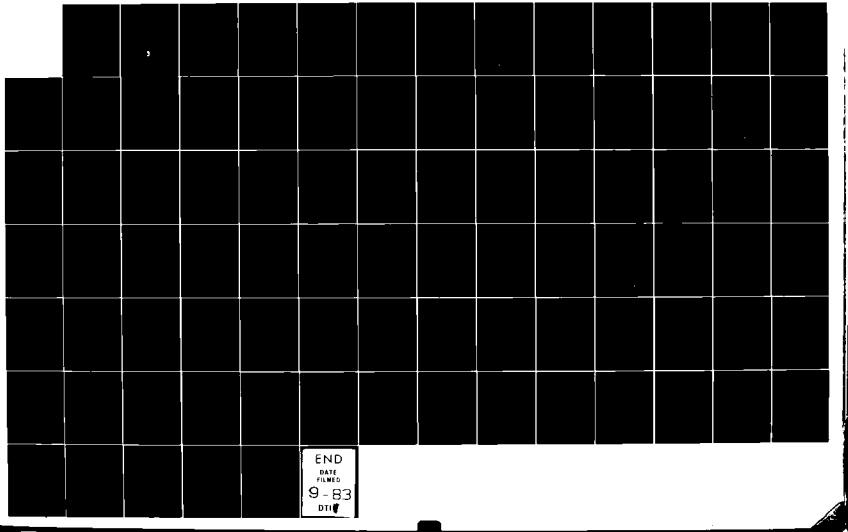

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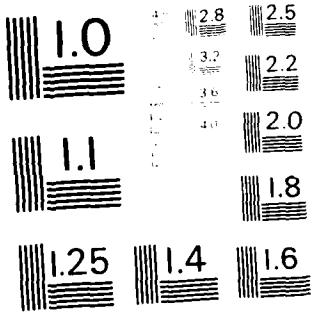

The Iranian Revolution and Modernization:

Way Stations to Anarchy

Jack C. Miklos

The National Defense University
National Security Essay Series 83-2

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Way Stations to Anarchy

by

Jack C. Miklos
Senior Research Fellow

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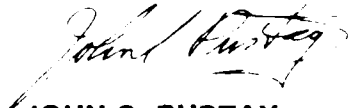
FOREWORD

To many observers in the West, events in Iran leading up to the revolution in 1979 took a mystifying and seemingly irrational course. In this National Security Essay, Jack Miklos, a foreign service officer who served in several key assignments in Iran, discusses the Iranian Revolution. He looks at theories of social modernization as applied to the history and culture of Iran, and then focuses in depth on the effects of land reform and the pervasive influence of what he identifies as the Iranian national character. His purpose is to examine social science theorizing with a case study of US-aided modernization which exploded in a traditional counter-reformation.

Based on firsthand observations as well as theory, the author offers insights into how modernization may have contributed to the Iranian Revolution. These insights can broaden our understanding of nations culturally much different from our own and perhaps help us appreciate the complexity of national behavior and some of its determinants.

To many US strategists, the loss of Iran as an ally in the Middle East was a major setback in attempts to achieve regional stability. To the extent that "way stations" to the Iranian Revolution can be identified, our understanding of that painful period in American foreign relations can be advanced. The National Defense University is pleased to offer this essay as another in our series of commentaries on national security issues.

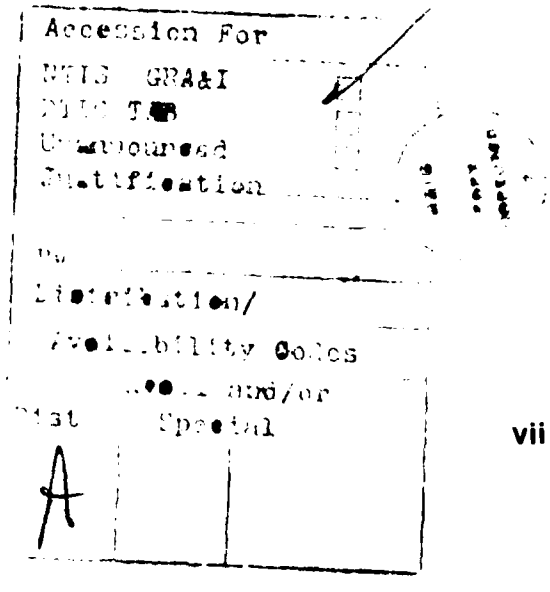


JOHN S. PUSTAY
Lieutenant General, USAF
President, NDU

PREFACE

My purpose in this study was to examine the Iranian Revolution in light of prominent theories on the effects of modernization. Readers who are not familiar with those theories will find the thoughts of prominent scholars and studies summarized in my opening discussion of "The Conceptual Framework" (chapter 1). Other readers may wish to move directly to the discussion of "The Case of Iran" (chapter 2). Though my study touched upon various aspects of the revolution, such as the Iranian education system and the changing status of the Iranian clergy, I focused most closely upon two issues—land reform and the Iranian national character—which were of special interest to me during my several assignments in that country.

JACK C. MIKLOS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack C. Miklos, now retired from the US Department of State, was a Senior Research Fellow at the National Defense University when he wrote this essay. He is now a Vice President with Wells Fargo Bank. He previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of State, and as Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister-Counselor, US Embassy, Tehran, Iran. A specialist in Near East–South Asian Political and Economic Affairs and in Executive and Program Management, Mr. Miklos holds a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Gonzaga University and a master's degree in political science from Stanford University.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and laymen alike seem generally agreed that modernization, whether achieved by evolution or revolution, is a complex concept which so far has eluded a satisfactory theoretical or historical explanation. The effort has certainly been made: witness the selected bibliographic appendix. The vast volume and range of literature on modernization questions reveal numerous unresolved differences among theorists and practitioners. An embarrassment of interpretative riches is accompanied by a similar plethora of methodological—and even purely logical—problems.

The study of revolution, for example, appears to be a microcosm of the contentiousness that has characterized the study of comparative politics. Theorists differ over how to isolate underlying common variables such as violence, conflict, instability, aggression, and alienation. They differ as to whether the basic unit of analysis should be individuals, groups, nation-states, or political systems. They differ over what events (civil strife, riots, guerrilla warfare, among others) may be included in the phenomena of revolution. Finally, they differ over both the nature of theory and the efficacy of theorizing itself. As Lawrence Stone acidly noted, we are left with "ingenious feats of verbal juggling in an esoteric language, performed around the totem pole of an abstract model, surrounded as far as the eye can see by the arid wastes of terminological definitions and mathematical formulae."[1]

It is not my purpose in this modest effort to attempt to sort out or resolve the many differences and difficulties which an approach to the questions of modernization and revolution presents. Rather, by examining the recent historical experience of Iran, I hope to make some slight contribution to understanding whether modernization breeds revolution and what

the United States should consider in forming policy with respect to countries moving from unsophisticated to modern society.

1.
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Many controversies about development proble would not be so futile if an effort were made to pay closer a tion to the context and milieu in which development takes p . One concept that has attracted considerable attention r y is that of political culture. The concept of political cu e may seem to some a revised and updated version of the old idea of national character about which Alexis de Tocqueville wrote so tellingly in *Democracy in America*. Indeed, its proponents argue that it is actually both.

Lucian Pye, for example, believes that it is a concept that makes more explicit and systematic much of the understanding associated with such long-standing concepts as political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national political psychology, and the fundamental values of a people. Political culture, by embracing the political orientations of both leaders and citizens, is more inclusive than such terms as "political style" or "operational code" which focus on elite behavior. On the other hand, Pye feels that it is a concept that is more explicitly political, hence more restrictive than such concepts as public opinion and national character. Not all political attitudes and sentiments of a people are necessarily relevant in defining their political culture and not all non-political beliefs should be excluded, for they can be of major importance to understanding what may happen in the political sphere.[1]

In the real world, and certainly among most nation-states, it is probably impossible to identify a national culture common to all members of a society. Indeed, there is considerable doubt about isolating unique characteristics of various subgroups in a society. Is there, for example, a model student? Or

a model businessman or army officer or politician? Experience may tell us no, but is that a reason to throw out the idea of a national character or political culture? In spite of the difficulties of definition and precision, there are certain observable traits about one society that distinguish it from others. Americans are seen as basically open, trusting, friendly; the British as reserved; the Germans as disciplined and efficient; and the Japanese as secretive and opaque.

What are the components of a political culture? Sidney Verba defines political culture as "the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political action takes place."[2] Samuel Beer suggests that political culture consists of political values subdivided into conceptions of authority and of national purpose, belief systems, and emotional attitudes and symbols.[3]

According to Beer, conceptions of authority are attitudes about what the rules of political behavior ought to be. This component of political culture would include the distinction between deference to authority or the converse attitude, egalitarianism and suspicion of authority. Conceptions of authority are concerned with the rules by which decisions are made and decisionmakers are chosen.

Conceptions of national purpose, he continues, are concerned with the content of decisions. The idea of "manifest destiny," so popular in a younger, more innocent America, is an example of national purpose—it involves attitudes about what the goals of the political system ought to be.

Beer's explanation of belief systems consists of perceptions of what is. The question is not the validity of the perceptions but the content of the perceptions themselves. People act on what they believe to be true, not on some idea of what the "objective" truth may be. If people believe that their destiny is preordained, they will not have much faith in temporal arrangements or their ability to manipulate events.

The effect of theological beliefs on politics over mankind's long history is well recognized. Indeed, as is noted elsewhere, it can be the dominant arbiter of politics. An orthodox religion which propounds a closed, comprehensive belief system as ultimate truth will judge political policies in terms of their compatibility with its system rather than in terms of their practical consequences. Herein lies the basic contest between tradition-religion and modernization-secularization. A religion or ideology that is intensely felt and believed does not encourage toleration of political differences. When conflicts are defined in terms of moral philosophy, concessions to the opposition take on connotations of amoral cooperation with evil or error. Small wonder that the Ayatollah Khomeini calls America evil and refuses to compromise.

Boer's final component of political culture—emotional attitudes and expressive symbols—can be thought of as events, such as the death of Ali in the sixth century, or institutions, as the Iranian monarchy, which acquire meaning to people transcending the objective impact such phenomena have on their nation's decisionmaking process. Such symbolic phenomena become objects with which the masses can identify despite a diversity of views or preferences on day-to-day issues. They also can be the focus of diffuse discontent and the moral basis for expressing discontent.

A political culture is the product of the collective history of a political system. Questions that naturally emerge from these formulations include whether there are certain forms and conditions of politics that are necessary to support, or at least not inhibit, social and economic development. What is the significance of the contention between old and new, between traditional values and modern practices for the stability and maintenance of political order? What values or beliefs, singular or in combination, are determinative? Are beliefs about the nature of man, the value of trust, orientations toward time, and the possibilities of progress of overriding importance? Is there something about certain societies that propel them toward anarchy in the absence of authoritarian government and in

others the basis for evolution toward egalitarian, democratic ways?

One effort to examine these questions was undertaken under the aegis of the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council and published under the title *Political Culture and Political Development.*[4] This publication brings together the findings of ten distinguished scholars, each of whom has examined a different country to provide historical perspective on both the political culture and the process of political development and to analyze the role of the most important agents of political socialization. It was hoped that a common theme would contribute to the knowledge of the variety of patterns of historical development, and also yield a better understanding about the possibilities and limitations for consciously changing a political culture and order, to facilitate national development. The countries involved ranged from the Soviet Union on one end of the political scale through Third World countries such as Turkey and Ethiopia to England and Germany on the other end of the political economic scale.

Not surprisingly, the study did not produce answers to the questions posed in the above paragraph in any way that might be said to have universal applicability. What it did do was reveal, in rich detail, the striking differences and diversity found in ten political cultures. These differences are found in their political structure, their responses or resistance to change, and the factors which seem to have had the most influence on the way in which they order their lives. Even with respect to certain common broad themes, such as democracy and authoritarianism, there is remarkably little similarity. Paradoxes exist. For example, a strong and effective traditional system may provide a people with a firm sense of identity and thus the confidence to fuse tradition with modernity (Japan), but the strength of a traditional order can also impede development to the degree that it makes impossible the infusion of any new or modern elements into the political culture (pre-revolutionary Ethiopia).

In summarizing the findings of these studies, Pye notes that the authors, in their concern over the relationship of political culture to development, focused on many of the same values. In particular he feels that there are four themes relating to the presence or absence of four specific values which relate to fundamental issues that arise in the developmental process. He describes them along the following lines:

1. *Trust and its opposite, distrust and suspicion.* Political cultures are built upon either the fundamental faith that it is possible to trust and work with fellow men or the expectation that most people, especially strangers, are to be distrusted. Each political culture differs according to its patterns of trust and distrust—its definitions of who are probably the safe people and who are the most likely enemies, and its expectations about whether public institutions or private individuals are more worthy of trust. The presence of diffuse distrust seems to impede seriously the creation of the kinds of public organizations essential for national development.

2. *Hierarchy and its opposite, equality.* Traditional societies tend to emphasize moral justification for hierarchical relationships. Development demands effective leadership, but it also encompasses sentiments about equality and the absence of arbitrary distinctions in status. How the different countries coped with this dilemma appears to be a measure of how successful they have been in development.

3. *Liberty and its converse, coercion.* Faith in the power of liberty to build strong nations appeared to be extremely low in all except the oldest democracies. On the other hand, no convincing case was made for the efficacy of coercion in easily creating national strength. Less developed countries found that expanded political participation may conflict with economic development, not because of the presumed greater efficiency and rationality of the authoritarian governments, but because increased popular participation gives more scope to the latent feelings of hostility and aggression which are a part of the general spirit of distrust and suspicion in the culture.

4. *Loyalty and commitment, and their opposites.* Does the political culture stress particularisms in the form of intense and overriding identification with family or parochial grouping, or more generalizable identifications such as with the nation as a whole? The process of development was seen as involving a widening of horizons as people grew out of their narrow parochial views and took on a concern for the entire system. There was a risk in this process, however, in that people might become alienated from or hostile toward the primordial attachments that give vitality to their parochial associations.

Pye concludes that the ten political cultures differed strikingly with respect to these four themes or values, and that the absence of any fixed relationship among the four is significant. The particular way in which the four themes combine provides much of the distinctive character of the processes of development in each country.

Although the study was inclusive with respect to answers to some of the questions posed, it did bring out some key points that need to be addressed in any examination of the modernization process. I have relied on it as a series of reference points in looking at the particular case of Iran and its people.

Interest in the question of modernization is not new. In one sense modernization was often thought of as synonymous with industrialization; attention was focused on the effect industrialization had on the economic well-being, wealth, and power of nations undergoing this transformation. Since industrialization was taking place almost exclusively in the West, this was the area most closely studied and analyzed. The approach was largely from a historical point of view and essentially pessimistic. Writers such as Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee looked at the grand sweep of history and found generalized sequences of the origins, growth, maturity, and decline of human societies. To them there was a cyclical pattern to be discerned and a certain inevitability about what the future held for societies as they moved through this

evolutionary process. Again concentrating on the West, proponents of pessimism felt that industrialization, urbanization, and secularization led to the breakup of the human community, the attenuation of religious values, the emergence of an impersonal mass society, alienation, and anomie.

There were others, however, who took a more optimistic point of view. Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx, for example, saw developments in Western society as moving in response to essentially economic causes through identifiable sequences to the greater benefits of an industrial society in the case of the former and to a socialist commonwealth in the case of the latter. Both, of course, were grounded in an examination and analysis of the historical past. The basic assumption seemed to be that the modernization process always moved toward the Western model, never away from it. All seemed to agree, however, that the basic concept involved changes, some good, some bad, either through evolution or revolution.

Change as the subject of interest to political scientists far pre-dates Western industrialization. Along the way many new ideas, concepts, and methods have been incorporated into the basic structure, among them psychology, sociology, group dynamics, and game theory. It was not until the post-colonial era after World War II that change and modernization began to be thought of in any systematic way insofar as the so-called Third World was concerned. Modern and traditional societies became categories. Measurements were taken to determine where different countries stood on the modernization path. Frank Sutton, is his 1955 paper on "Social Theory and Comparative Politics," summarized most of the generally accepted characteristics of these two categories. One of the points he made was that a modern society exhibited a high degree of social mobility. As will be pointed out later, however, social mobility characterized traditional societies like Iran, the subject of this modernization study.

The essential difference between modern and traditional societies lies in the greater control which modern man has over his natural and social environment. Modern society is characterized by the vast accumulation of knowledge and the diffusion of this knowledge by means of literacy, mass communications, and education. Dankwart Rustow holds that modernization involves a "rapidly widening control over nature through closer cooperation among men."[5] He concedes, however, that modernization is a term still not universal even among scholars, and its meaning is not always made precise by those who accept the word. He notes that modernization comprises many specific changes and that different observers look at these changes from their unique bases. Historians examine successive phases such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment. Economists concern themselves with changes from subsistence agriculture and barter to monetary exchange, the accumulation of capital, and industrial development. The transition from ascription to achievement as the basis of social status and from the "extended" family to the "nuclear" family have attracted the attention of sociologists and social anthropologists. Political scientists have examined the expansion of bureaucracies, the intrusion of the masses on the political stage, and the replacement of empires by nation-states.

Rustow rejects the concept that human history moves in cycles from perfection to decay and regeneration, or as a predicament which man escapes only in the hereafter. He contends that man is the captain of his own fate, the shaper of his own destiny, as the modernization process demonstrates. Modernization is a man-made intellectual, technological, and social revolution. He believes that there is a close linkage between scientific and technical progress and changes in the relationship of man to man.[6] In this spirit Rustow and Robert Ward provide a checklist of the characteristics of a modern polity which a traditional polity lacks:[7]

- A highly differentiated and functionally specific system of governmental organization.

- A high degree of integration within this governmental structure.

- The prevalence of rational and secular procedures for making political decisions.

- The large volume, wide range, and high efficacy of political and administrative decisions.

- A widespread and effective sense of popular identification with the history, territory, and national identity of the state.

- Widespread popular interest and involvement in the political system, though not necessarily in decisionmaking.

- The allocation of political roles by achievement rather than ascription.

- Judicial and regulatory techniques based upon a predominantly secular and impersonal system of law.

Scholars also feel that modernization is a global process—that while all societies were at one time traditional, they are now either modern or in the process of becoming modern. They also feel that while leadership in this process and in the more detailed patterns of modernization will differ from one society to another, all societies will move through essentially the same stages. Focusing on the common characteristics of modernization, some, like Cyril Black, believe it is a homogenizing process that could lead to a stage at which various societies could be capable of forming a world state. Above all, he sees modernization as imbued with virtue. The traumas of modernization are many and profound, but in the long run it is not only inevitable, but desirable—it enhances human well-being, culturally and materially.[8]

As Samuel Huntington has pointed out, however, there are some modernization revisionists and critics lurking about who have not completely accepted the optimistic if not idyllic portrait described above.[9] Questions have been raised about the meaning and usefulness of the concepts of modernity and tradition; the relationship between modernity and tradition; and the ambiguities in the concept of modernization itself.

In the first place, Huntington said, the modern ideal is set forth, and then everything which is not modern is labeled traditional. What is left over is assumed to have all the coherence and precision of the positively defined concept. This obfuscates the diversity which may exist in the residual phenomenon. It also obscures the fact that the differences between one and another manifestation of the same residual concept may be as great as or greater than the differences between either of the residual manifestations and the more precisely defined ideal. While so-called traditional societies may have in common the fact that they are not modern, they may have little else in common. Pigmy tribes and the agriculturalists of medieval Europe, for example, would not seem to fit very comfortably under the ideal traditional model.

The concept of modernity also suffers ambiguities because of the tendency to identify modernity with virtue. In particular, there seems to be a tendency to overlook the difference between what is modern and what is Western. Modern society has been Western society writ abstractly and polysyllabically. But to a nonmodern, non-Western society, the processes of modernization and Westernization may appear very different indeed. So too may the means and goals of modernization.

Other questions have developed about the relations between traditions and modernity. The simpler theories of modernization implied a zero-sum relationship between the two: the rise of modernity was to be accompanied by the fading of tradition. This hardly reflects the real world around us. The attitudes and behavior patterns may in some cases be fused; in

others, they may comfortably coexist despite apparent incongruity; and, of course, in others they may be in unresolved conflict. Certainly, in the case of Iran, we have seen the instruments of modernization used to promulgate the virtues of tradition while vilifying the evils of modernization. All societies combine elements of both the traditional and modern. None has remained totally untouched by one or another aspect of modernization, and none has totally eliminated all vestiges of tradition.

Nevertheless, whatever ambiguities and contradictions ideal modern and traditional types may possess, they do provide useful conceptual clarity in describing a given society at a given time. The principal difficulty in dealing with the concept of modernization is how to describe the process by which movement proceeds from one stage to the next. All societies seem to be not only a mix of modernity and tradition but also in transition. While the starting point might be fixed at the beginning of civilization, the end is unfixed and unknown.

2.
THE CASE OF IRAN

At the beginning of 1978 the Shah of Iran had been on the Peacock Throne 36 years. While there were political and economic thunder clouds on the horizon, few believed his regime and the monarchy itself was on the verge of ending. All of the levers of effective power seemed to be in his hands. He had full control of the organized state machinery, exercised direct command over a military establishment of 390,000, had an ubiquitous security apparatus, and unprecedented wealth from oil revenues (averaging around $20 billion per year). Yet in the course of the following 12 months, this imposing power structure crumbled with a speed that was truly astonishing. The Shah left Iran on 16 January 1979 as an aging religious mystic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returned in triumph from 15 years in exile to found the Iranian Islamic Republic.

Inevitably the questions and assessments flew. What went wrong? Who was responsible? Corruption, repression, foreign conspiracies—the explanations seemed to multiply endlessly. The Shah himself in his last volume of memoirs (*Response à l'Histoire*, Paris, 1979) credited a number of forces, including Communists (domestic and foreign), local reactionaries, the "oil lobby," the world press, the spoiled recipients of his largesse, and what he evidently conceived to have been a mysterious betrayal by the United States. Although couched in terms of the Shah's "crimes" rather than as an explanation for his downfall, in an interview with *Time* magazine, 7 January 1980, Khomeini listed a number of reasons including economic dependence on the United States, destruction of the agricultural sector, foreign alliances with oppressors and tyrants, oil sales and military assistance to Israel, annihilation of Islam, and Western cultural corruption.

Where the truth lies will doubtless be the subject of popular and scholarly investigations for some time to come. This present effort does not profess such an attempt, but chooses to focus on the historical context, the changes that were taking place in the economy and society under a determined effort of the monarch to "modernize" Iran, and how these changes (or lack of them) set the stage for one of the more portentous events of current times. In doing so, I hope to draw some general conclusions about the process of modernization in the Third World and what implications they may have for US foreign policy.

Where does the modernizing leader secure support for his reforms? The problem is ticklish. If powerful counter-modernizing forces are not to be aroused, a coalition must be built from both modernizing and traditional sources. The first source of support is the state bureaucracy, for through control of the bureaucracy the modernizer can bring individuals from non-aristocratic social groups into positions of power. He cannot do this on an unrestrained basis, however, without weakening the authority of the bureaucracy and possibly provoking more stubborn and overt aristocratic resistance. He must attempt to blend new men and old in his bureaucracy so that it retains the prestige of the latter while serving the needs of the former.

A determined modernizer and an organized bureaucracy can have considerble impact on a traditional society. It is questionable, however, whether they will have sufficient power to put through significant reforms without the support of other groups. The classic source of such support has been the middle class—the financial, commercial, professional, and industrial bourgeoisie. In the case of Iran, the educated middle class ended up joining ranks with the traditional clergy to overthrow the Shah.

Another potential source of support consists of the masses of the population. Many of the reforms introduced by modernizers are designed to benefit the majority of the

people, in the countryside as well as in the cities. There are problems involved in this tactic, however, since appeal to the masses may involve policies which strike at the heart of traditional vested interests. Land reform in a clear example. While the masses may well be capable of spontaneous and erratic violence, they are not likely to be capable of sustained, organized, intelligent political support. On issues of secularization, changes in customs, and education, they may well line up behind other traditional elites such as the clergy to oppose the modernizer. The difficulties of mobilizing support from the masses highlight the basic problem of the reformer: how to expand as well as how to concentrate power. Power which is sufficiently concentrated to promote reform may be too concentrated to assimilate the social forces released by reform.

The leaders of traditional societies today seem to have little choice but to attempt to promote social and economic reform. To achieve this they are generally forced to the conclusion that they must resort to authoritarian measures which are effective because they rest on centralized power. Bold innovation and radical change *do not* ordinarily flow from the deliberations of traditionalists intent on preserving what is familiar, comfortable, and in their own vested interests.

Once having chosen the authoritarian path, is it possible to ease back after a time and turn from master and leader to servant answerable to independent opinion and contrary views? Samuel Huntington remarks that he can think of no case where a direct shift was peacefully made from absolute monarchy to an electoral regime, with a government responsible to parliament and a king who reigned but did not rule. Such a change, he points out, would involve a basic shift in legitimacy of the monarch to the sovereignty of the people and such change generally requires either time or revolution. Wherever time is not available, the result is revolution.

3.
THE IRANIAN LEGACY

Every country and people are to some extent a product and consequence of their past. Iran and the Persians are no exception, and an understanding of contemporary Iran requires some reflection on its history. That history has obviously been shaped in part by geography. Iran forms the bridgehead on the way to Central Asia, it bars the way to India, and it dominates the waters of the Persian Gulf. Its western and northwestern mountain ranges merge into those of Turkish Anatolia and Soviet Caucasus, while the lowlands of the southwest extend through Iraq and lead into Saudi Arabia.

For a millennium after its entry into recorded history, Iran was a battlefield for rival city-states and later nation-states. There the ancient powers of Babylonia and Assyria were almost continuously waging war against one another. Where conquerors marched, so too did merchants and pilgrims; trade routes became invasion roads and vice versa. The Achaemenian kings made Persia the center of the first world empire, extending its borders across the Mediterranean in the west and as far as the Indus River in the east. In more recent times it has been both occupied and wooed by such modern powers as Great Britain, which looked at Iran as the bulwark protecting India in the imperialist days of the great Raj, and by Russia, which saw it as a much coveted outlet to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Today it is the focus of international attention and concern and the possible scene of superpower confrontation.

Two of the most powerful threads that run through Iran's history are religion and the monarchy. Sometimes allied,

sometimes at cross purposes, they have shaped the destiny and character of the Persians from the outset. Iran's fortunes have waxed and waned with those of its rulers and its religion. Before Iran became an empire, its kings believed that warfare and conquest meant killing, enslaving, looting, and the carrying of the gods of subdued peoples to the capital so as to make them too the servants of the victors. Although the founders of the Persian Empire were no less lustful for conquest and power, they conceived their mission to go beyond personal gain. It was the view of Cyrus II and his successors that a Supreme God had entrusted them with the task of uniting the people of the earth in one kingdom of justice and peace.

Although the religion of the early Achaemenid kings is conjectural, they seem to have been drawn to Zoroastrianism. Certainly the ideas of Cyrus and Zoroaster, who grew out of the same nation at about the same time, seemed to have met and merged. Zoroaster taught that Ahura Mazda, the spirit of good, in his fight against Ahriman, the spirit of evil, summons men to assist him in the battle which is the drama of the world and to accomplish by their decision the clear distinction between the hosts of light and the armies of darkness. In this struggle, which is not only a moral fight in man's own heart but also a very real war against everything evil, men need a leader, the representative of Ahura Mazda on earth. This was the divine mission of the Persian kings.

This legitimation of the kingship, this union between political and transcendental power, even though Islamized and interpreted in the light of the unitary point of view of Islam, is the matrix of much of Iranian thought and perception today. One point seems worth noting in considering the longevity of these beliefs. The Achaemenian kings were not considered and worshiped as gods, unlike later Roman emperors. Nowhere among their manifold titles do they glory in their divine nature. They assert only that they have been invested with the supreme power to achieve the rule of the gods on earth. The concept, although limited to spiritual matters, is not unfamiliar to members of the Roman Catholic Church today.

4.
PRELUDE TO A REVOLUTION

Iran's efforts to transform itself from a member of the Third World into an integral part of the industrial world have been hailed and scathed. The motives of its leaders, most particularly those of the deposed Shah, have been questioned as too grandiose and simply a means of self-preservation or self-enrichment. His method and approach to development have been characterized as impetuous, ill-informed, and unrealistic.

Whatever its faults, however, Iran was engaged in a massive effort over the past two decades which had the effect of transforming it from a state of near-17th century feudalism to something resembling a semi-industrial power which compared favorably (at least until the Shah's overthrow in the early months of 1978) with many other Third World countries similarly pursuing modernization.

The explanation for both the successes and failures of Iran lies in its historical past, its cultural legacy, institutions, and bountiful income from a single natural resource—oil. The blueprint it followed was a simple one—secularization (Westernization) of the society, structural changes in the economy, particularly the landlord-peasant relationship, and social reform (education, literacy, women's emancipation). A perspective of the distance traveled might be found in a brief description of Iran at the turn of the century.

> In 1900, Iran was . . . a fairly primitive, almost isolated state, barely distinguishable as an economic entity. About one fifth of the population [of about 10 million] lived in small towns; another quarter consisted of nomadic tribes; while the rest eked out an existence in poor

> villages. Agriculture was the primary occupation, and the almost complete lack of roads, railways, or other transport facilities made it essential for each geographic region to be self-sufficient in foodstuffs. Industrial activity was sparse, with no serious attempts having been made to explore or exploit a potentially vast array of natural resources. Oil, the future life-blood of the economy, had still not been discovered in commercial quantities, while the economy had less than ten years' experience of modern banking institutions.[1]

Urban conditions had not advanced since the Middle Ages. A tiny sliver of elites maintained a reasonably good life behind secure walls while the majority lived in slum conditions of poverty, disease, and illiteracy. The streets of Tehran, "narrow, without sidewalks, covered with several inches of dust in summer and the same amount of mud in winter, were dirty, uneven, winding, and full of holes."[2] At night, the streets were unlighted. As a result of such conditions, lawlessness was rife; bands of ruffians rampaged through the streets at night, and rival gangs did battle with one another even in daylight. The army suffered from lack of training, and was subject to many administrative abuses such as padded rolls, a disproportionately high ratio of officers to other ranks, inadequate pay, and a hereditary system of commissions.[3] The average life expectancy was less than 30 years. "Families were large; women had no rights; men could have as many as four wives; and male children were strongly preferred. In order to keep the peasants ignorant and poor, the landowners opposed the establishment of schools or clinics."[4]

Educational instruction, such as it was, consisted of a single classroom presided over by a mullah. Only boys were admitted, and from the age of seven they followed a strictly traditional curriculum of reading and writing, calligraphy, Arabic grammar, and a lot of rote learning that included the memorization of passages from the Qur'an, verses of poetry, and the Shiah catechism. Secondary education was carried on mainly through the services of private tutors. The schools

were kept going solely by private donations and funds from the *vagf* (religious) land incomes. The only institution of higher learning was the Polytechnic College, founded in 1851 for the purpose of training officials and administrators for the bureaucracy. Those that could afford it sent their children abroad for higher education. Over 96 percent of the population was illiterate.[5]

The promulgation of the constitutional documents of 1906–1907 in theory converted Iran from a traditional society to a constitutional monarchy, but this was an illusion. It has often been assumed that Iran's intellectuals and Westernized moderates were responsible for constitutional reforms. While it is true that they gave impetus to the movement, critical support came from the Bazaar and the clergy. They were inspired less by the ideal of constitutional government than by their hatred of the economic and political influence that outsiders, particularly Russian and British, had acquired through the acquiescence of a corrupt but absolute monarch. Indeed, among the clergy there was spirited debate over the true meaning of such concepts as liberty and equality and sharp differences over whether Islamic law and Western constitutionalism could be reconciled.[6] In addition to the dissensions among the various groups that had initially pressed for the granting of a constitution—dissensions which became more acute as time went on—there was a fundamental paradox in the constitution itself. This paradox was to remain throughout the rule of the Pahlavis. As Amin Banami has noted, the Constitution of 1906 tried to incorporate all the tenets of Western liberal democracy, which was of course based on 17th- and 18th-century concepts of natural law and the rights of man, but at the same time to make all legal enactments of parliament subject to strict conformity with the Islamic code and the approval of the Muslim clerical leaders.[7] In other words, it set out to establish a liberal democracy with secular institutions but without the prerequisite of such a system—the separation of church and state. It was this basic contradiction which was to be a key element in the differences which continually plagued relations between the clergy and the Shah and eventually led to his

downfall. As Ali Shariati, a leading ideologue of the new regime of Ayatollah Khomeini was to write later, "Iran should throw off foreign domination of western ideas and seek a militant, self-assertive cultural identity in a revitalization of Islam." He envisaged a tightly controlled society led by a single charismatic figure and an elite composed of those qualified to interpret scripture.[8] And as Ibrahim Yazdi, Iran's Foreign Minister at the time, said in a press inteview in 1979, "The west defines religion as the private relation between man and the Supreme Being, something completely private. When it is confronted with the situation in Iran, then it does not understand what the Ayatollah Khomeini has to do with political matters. In Islam, the private relationship between man and God is only one part, not the whole of Islam."[9]

The Ayatollah Khomeini, by then well known, had this to say:

> All the laws and regulations you need are present in our Islam, whether the laws and regulations pertaining to state management, taxes, rights, penalties or to other issues. You need no new legislation. You must implement what has already been legislated. This saves you a lot of time and effort and spares you the need of borrowing laws from the east or the west. Everything is, God be thanked, ready to be used.[10]

No doubt, of all groups in Iran's society, the clergy bore the brunt of reforms set in motion by the modernization process. There was an inevitability about this because any move toward Westernization, or perhaps more correctly, secularization, impinged on areas in which the clergy had a traditional control or at least a strong influence. Education, for example, was their special province. Their attitude toward all aspects of education was strongly, even violently, anti-Western. Reform of the legal system also eroded the clergy's authority and power. A particularly severe blow fell when a law was enacted in 1932 which required the registration of documents and property to be handled by secular courts only. Because the clergy had derived a large proportion of their income from the

discharge of this business, many were forced to seek secular employment. Islamic social institutions also were undermined with the changing status of women in society and personal life. The clergy, previously exempt from military service, became liable for two years of active duty.

The advent of modernizing reform accelerated the development of the middle class, but one different in character from the old bourgeoisie. Few of the earlier middle class had a Western education. The essential qualification for admittance to the new professional/bureaucratic middle class was a Western education or a similar kind of education. Its distinctive mark was an expertise acquired through a modern education. Policies of state capitalism and centralized administration required talents and skills that were not features of a traditional government concerned only with the recruitment of soldiery, the collection of taxes, and the maintenance of the King's order. Students sent abroad for their university education formed, on their return, the core of the new professional middle class.

The growth of a middle class and the secularization of certain parts of the unchanged society from the turn of the century until post-World War II was not accompanied, however, by structural changes elsewhere. In 1946 as much as 75 percent of the work force was still engaged in agriculture, and the system of land tenure had remained little changed from the feudal patterns of ancient times. With the exception of a few peasant small holders, the majority did not own the land they tilled, but were either tenants paying a fixed sum annually to the landlord or sharecroppers. The peasant had no security of tenure. In theory he was free to leave his village and go elsewhere; in practice he was usually in debt to the landlord and consequently could not do so.

In the Parliament and in the upper reaches of government, the traditional alliances of landlord/tribal khan and clergy maintained their overwhelming majority. They were united usually only in negativisms. Leonard Binder's contemporary

observation was that "Each power structure, each interest formation, stands alone in the general struggle judging when and how to act and with whom. No outside group can move it by any claim of right or duty. There is no obligation, only a market place where buyers and sellers may bargain."[11] They were largely a group of self-elected characters that, as Binder observed, "can best be analyzed from the point of view of the individual" and unified in their determination to preserve their own interests which were grounded in the maintenance of the traditional structure. This included preservation of the monarchy, notwithstanding the differences and resentments that marred the relationship.

Although the basic orientation of the collective body politic was self-centered and self-interested, strands of pragmatism and nationalism were also evident. An American program of economic, financial, and technical assistance was welcomed and approved and the concept of national economic development planning was adopted with the passage of legislation setting up a Plan Organization whose activities were to be funded by oil revenue and, hopefully, foreign loans. This beginning of a formal, organized approach to economic development soon foundered on the emotion-charged question of the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry, which was in the hands of the British as a consequence of concessions granted to a private British investor, William D'Arcy, in 1901. There was, of course, the understandable and legitimate desire of Iran to have control over its own natural resources. But the tactics employed and the totally different perceptions of the rights of the parties involved, as well as a cut-off-the-nose-to-spite-the-face attitude, led to an impasse, brought the economy to a grinding standstill, emptied the treasury, and deprived the country of the opportunity to secure foreign credits.

As a former Iranian Minister of Finance noted, exaggerated nationalism and economic development do not necessarily go hand-in-hand and, in fact, often conflict with each other and defeat the ultimate long-range national purpose of

developing a backward country's economy.[12] This was the Mossadegh crisis of the early 1950s. Its consequences were profound for the economic and political evolution of Iran over the coming decades. It exposed the inherent fragility of the entire system and led the Shah to decide he was going to rule as well as reign once he had recovered from the trauma of very nearly losing his throne permanently. What was also exposed was the volatility of the Iranian mobs in the street. As the *New York Times* recorded at the time of the Mossadegh crisis, those who only two days earlier were demanding death to the Shah and busy destroying the symbols of his regime were back in the streets proclaiming their undying loyalty to his person and hunting down the leaders they had so enthusiastically followed before. One longtime observer of the Iranian scene noted:

> It did not matter that the combination of forces that brought about the counterrevolution of August 1953 was suspect, a complex of traditional interests consisting of neighborhood gang leaders, frightened landlords, major sectors of the army, tribal leaders, and interested allies. The principle of kingship won the day among the crowds that surged from the slums and bazaars of South Tehran to capture the radio station and proclaim the return of the absent Shah's government. If revolutionary republicanism was to come, it was not then.[13]

The events of this turbulent period have been amply described and analyzed by a number of Iranian and foreign scholars and need not be amplified further here. It does seem important to note, however, that the issue was not one of reform and modernization versus traditionalism and maintenance of the status quo. Indeed, of the numerous political parties and groups that emerged during and immediately after World War II, none, not even the Tudeh Party which was under the control of the Communists and directed from Moscow, advocated land reform or other fundamental changes in the social-political structure. Their programs were in most cases remarkably similar, with key planks advocating progressive

labor legislation, improved standards of living, reform of the judicial system, national industrialization, and elimination of foreign influences. As between the Shah and Mossadegh, the struggle was over the question of power and authority, and not policy. Mossadegh wanted the Shah to reign but not rule, so he asked for and obtained increasingly broad powers from the Parliament to back up his demands. Moreover, despite the explicit constitutional provision that the Shah was commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Mossadegh sought this authority as well. Mossadegh lost.

For the next ten years, Iran was occupied with the aftermath of this crisis. When the dispute over oil was resolved with the British, and revenue from its sale once again began to flow into the country to finance the economic development programs laid out by the Plan Organization, the military was rehabilitated and modernized. Nearly all political party activity ceased. Subversive groups were broken up and hunted down, and others became inactive or quiescent as the central authority of the Shah was restored and a period of recovery got underway.

5.
LAND REFORM, HEART OF THE REVOLUTION

There is much debate and dispute about the Shah's motives for seeking land reform and it is doubtful, and not really very important, that the question can be resolved one way or another. The important point is that he made it the key to an economic-social program that was to shake the very foundations of traditionalism and set Iran on a path that even now, in spite of the appearance of regression under the banner of fundamental Islamism, is probably irreversible.

The Shah had already taken the lead in 1950 by launching a program of distributing Imperial estates to the peasantry. This was conceived as a pilot project, to be emulated by more comprehensive legislation that would affect the majority of Iranian land holdings. When, however, the government introduced the first land reform bill to the Parliament in 1959, it encountered furious opposition and efforts to disembowel it through various amendments. In February 1960 the leading religious personality of the day, Ayatollah Borujerdi, issued a statement "that any step limiting the size of landed estates would be contrary to Islam."[1] The makeup of the Parliament itself was, as one Iranian writer put it, "essentially the same old lion; only its mane was bushier. It was still a parliament of the privileged classes, composed of men of means and of education, a formidable group drawn from the traditional elite of Iran. More than 90 percent were landlords or members of the powerful bureaucratic class. None represented the depressed levels of society."[2] It was this Parliament which passed a land act in 1960 which was labeled a mockery of land reform.

By this time the Shah and his reformist allies, fed up with the intractability of vested interests in the Parliament, seized on the request of a reformist Prime Minister to dissolve the Parliament and rule through royal decree when two flawed elections which passed in rapid succession did not produce anything better. Thus the government flanked its opponents and passed a Land Reform Act under royal authority. When the legality of this maneuver was contested, it was decided that the way to deal with the question was to hold a national referendum to get the verdict of the public. In preparation, a national congress was called in Tehran and attended by some 4,700 peasants. As a historian of the land reform movement in Iran was to write, "For the first time in the history of the country, peasants from different parts of the country were brought into contact with each other, and for the first time, they felt a sense of unity and strength. Many of those who took part still remember the congress as a great landmark in the change that has taken place in their conditions."[3]

It was at this congress that the Shah took his place as honorary chairman and with no forewarning brought out a broad policy based on six points of action, which soon came to be called the White Revolution. The six points were the following: (1) the Land Reform Law; (2) a law nationalizing the country's forests; (3) a law permitting the sale of state-owned factories to the private sector to provide finances for the land reform program; (4) a law requiring that 20 percent of the net profits of factories and industrial establishments be shared with the workers; (5) a law to amend election procedures toward the establishment of universal suffrage; and (6) a law providing for a nationwide literacy corps. In addition, the Shah declared that under the provisions of the Constitution, whereby the powers of the nation are derived from the people, his six points would be placed before the public in the form of a referendum, so that the people could decide directly upon the legality of his program before convocation of the next Parliament.

Immediately after the six-point program was announced, a leading clergyman sent a letter to the Prime Minister warning that the government must not lay its hands on the endowed religious estates. He reiterated that from the outset the religious leaders had been opposed to the distribution of private lands. Even with its fait accompli, the government must be content and leave the religious lands alone. The Prime Minister's reply, made public as was the clerical protest, claimed that the peasants who lived and worked on the endowed religious lands were no different in their conditions and expectations than the others. He went on to say that the overseers of the religious lands were notoriously dishonest, having diverted income from these estates to their private use. While giving assurances that the government had no intention of exposing these embezzlements, he made it clear that the government was determined to put a stop to them and to give the peasantry on religious lands the same opportunities that had been given others.

Not surprisingly, the clergy was furious and organized violent demonstrations to protest the government's proposals and to obstruct the scheduled referendum. In addition to being opposed to land reform, the clergy also singled out the provision of universal suffrage in the government's program as being particularly objectionable. Their objection was based on the constitutional provision that Iran was officially Islamic and that both the King and the government were bound to protect the faith. That faith, in turn, followed the Prophet who wrote that men "stand superior to women in that God hath preferred the one over the other. . . . Those whose perverseness ye fear, admonish them and remove them to the bed chambers and beat them." It had been specifically laid down by Islamic theologians that only men "have the privilege of electing chiefs." This repression produced a counter-demonstration by women teachers and other female employees of many public and private institutions in protest against the clerical abuse and reactionism.

Confident that he had the majority of the people behind him, the Shah, two days before the scheduled referendum, traveled to Qom, the headquarters of the Shiah clergy's high command from which opposition to the government's program was being directed. There, in a public ceremony, he distributed the estates of the Qom "diocese" by personally handing the land deeds to the peasants. In the referendum, he received an overwhelming majority of the five and one-half million balllots. Landlordism, an Iranian institution of antiquity, lay dying.

While clerical opposition was articulated on constitutional grounds, a more fundamental economic-political issue was at stake. Much of the income that pays pensions and other expenses of the clergy derived from landholding religious foundations. These institutions received their property as bequests from the faithful rich, or from previous kings to whom all the land once belonged. The *vaqf*, as these agencies are known, owned villages that numbered in the thousands. There was little doubt that their transfer to peasant ownership would leave the clergy even more dependent on their flock for direct contributions to sustain them. Since the bazaari were the principal source of this kind of support, it meant that pressure for increased contributions would be felt most heavily in this quarter. It also meant that the political power than went with the clergy's ability to spread money among the legions of poor would be affected.

This frontal assault on constitutional provisions and processes, on tradition and vested interests, and on the very economic basis of privilege and position, led to a coalition of clergy and National Fronters left over from Mossadegh days, that challenged the Shah and government once again. Early in the summer of 1963, on the commemorative day of the martyrdom of Hossain during which religious fervor and emotion are at their peak, mobs from the bazaar once more swept into the streets—looting, burning, and destroying whatever they could. The rioters made a particular effort to frighten

women and to demonstrate that their new rights exposed them to serious menace.

In many respects the 1963 uprising was the foreshadow of the fateful riots of 1978 which lead to the overthrow of the Shah. A key difference, however, was that the army then held fast and the government took swift and severe action No concessions were made to the opposition and the principal leaders, including a then relatively unknown cleric named Ayatollah Khomeini, were arrested and banished. The boards were now cleared; the Shah was firmly in control. He had what appeared to be a popular program and he and his modernization allies were determined to press on. As one prescient commentator at the time noted, however, "His program could be his risk—of throne, dynasty, and head."[4]

6.
CARRYING OUT A REVOLUTION

Not surprisingly, there is a vast gap between proclaiming a social-economic revolution and implementing one. The problems of financing it, managing it, administering it, and maintaining its momentum were instantly apparent. The technocrats were horrified. As British economist George Baldwin, who was intimately involved with Iran's economic development planning, wrote:

> Nobody guessed that the most important, most expensive program in the agricultural sector would be something not even mentioned in the Plan. It was not that the planners forgot about land reform or belittled its importance Among Iranian and foreign technicians there was general agreement that in the long run land reform was a necessary condition of higher productivity over much of the country. But it was anyone's guess how much national output might be raised without land reform, or how much and how long land reform might disrupt production. The planners were not blind to the importance of this question; they simply avoided it. They knew that it was too political and too controversial a topic for their views to count for much. So they looked the other way [1]

The planners' attention was focused on increasing productivity and output in support of the general objectives of accelerating economic growth, industrialization, and diversification. Handed a social-economic revolutionary program to implement, they had no sure sense of how to proceed. Suddenly hundreds of new agricultural cooperatives had to be created to assume central responsibility for many functions formerly provided by landlords. Landlords had to be compensated for their lands. Furthermore, the educated technocrat,

far removed from the soil, was not anxious to labor with illiterate farmers in the most primitive of conditions. It was easy to see that land reform was only going to work through strong and sustained government support and financing and that it was an immense and complicated task.

It is, of course, a maxim that no country can achieve sustained economic development without a transformation of the rural sector. The conventional way for a developing country to industrialize is to extract the necessary surplus out of agriculture, through taxation, forced acquisition of food, and other means. Whether under a free enterprise system or a Communist system, this rule holds true. Indeed, in the case of both Russia and China, one of the fiercest issues of dispute has been about how far to squeeze the rural sector to support industrialization. Because of oil income, however, Iran, at the outset, was saved from having to build its industrialization program on this foundation. Nevertheless, as will be described later, this in some ways turned out to be a questionable advantage.

Before discussing the more specific elements of Iran's land reform efforts and their consequences, it might be useful to note some of its prereform characteristics. While Iran shared many problems with other comparable Third World countries, it also reflected an important historical difference. Iran's agriculture had never been the object of colonial attention nor was it seen as a potential source of supply to outside powers. Consequently, it was not organized along those commercial lines which would encourage the growth of cash crops for export. Land was held as a form of wealth in itself, as much as a means of generating income.

The membership of the landlord class was an agglomeration of different components assembled over the centuries. It included members of the court given land by the Shah for services rendered, traditional landowners, tribal leaders, merchants who had bought land out of trading profits, and religious leaders controlling vaft (waqf) lands. Before land reform,

it was estimated that something less than one-half of 1 percent of the total population owned up to 60 percent of the land under cultivation. As recently as 1977, Iran's rural population of 17.5 million lived in some 60,000 villages—14 million spread over 48,000 villages with a population under 250 inhabitants.[2]

The high concentration of land ownership in the majority of cases, along with the large share of the crops extracted by the landlords (up to 80 percent), had perpetuated a very inequitable distribution of agricultural income. The vast majority of the tenants lived at or near subsistence level and were almost always indebted to their landlords or village moneylenders. The tenants, for the most part, had no permanent right to the land they cultivated, as the landlords had the power to periodically redistribute holdings at will. In some areas, landlords levied uses in addition to a share of the crop, and the tenant was also subject to perform certain personal services. The whole fabric of socio-economic life of the Iranian village was governed and determined by the nature of the landlord-tenant relationship.

In practice, the villages were owned, ruled, and often made an object of commercial bargaining, without the knowledge—to say nothing of the consent—of their inhabitants. The government's sphere of influence in village public life was generally weak. Many of the landlords exploited their tenants with the sole purpose of getting labor and the land rent out of them, and there was little or no investment in fixed capital assets to increase productivity. In short, the Iranian tenants lived in poverty, ignorance, and continual insecurity.

As it came to pass, land reform occurred in three phases. In the first phase it permitted the landlord to retain only one village, or equivalent portions of villages, and called for the sale of all other holdings to the farmers already tilling the soil. Priority was given to those farmers who already possessed some means of production, e.g., oxen owners. The simplicity of the law, and its lack of initial concern with economic viability

of fragmented plots, rendered its quick implementation possible, inexpensive, and without too much friction. The distribution of land to the farmers who were actually cultivating it, leaving the field layout undisturbed, minimized major dislocations. There were, to be sure, certain inequities in this initial phase and only about one fifth of Iran's farmer population actually got land.

The second stage of reform made up for some of the inequities of the original scheme. Landowners not covered by the first stage (tea plantations, orchards, land under mechanized cultivation) were given three options: (1) to lease their land to farmers; (2) to sell the land to them; or (3) to divide the land in accordance with existing crop sharing arrangements. More than 12 million persons were affected by the second stage.[3]

The first two stages of reform did not, however, tackle the question of uneconomic lots, which were subject to further breakups among survivors. The third stage of land reform, introduced in 1969, intended to replace the tenancies entered into under the second stage with a permanent sale of land to the tenant cultivators, and to establish agricultural corporations in order to improve farming methods and techniques. The introduction of farm corporations was considered a crucial measure in paving the way for consolidating lands and preventing further fragmentations at the death of existing owners. The legislation also stipulated that the Islamic law of inheritance, which provides a precise formula for the division of all property at the death of the property holder, would not be observed. The clergy, already upset with the whole idea of land reform, found this an additional cause for unhappiness because it was seen as a contravention of divine law.

Perceptions of the desirable objectives of land reform shifted over time. Initially, top priority and emphasis were given to breaking up the plural landlord-peasant relationship and handing ownership to the cultivator who actually worked the land. This, to a significant degree, was achieved. Focus then

shifted to the problem of increasing agricultural output. As already noted, phase three was, in part, designed to supersede individual ownership with larger-scale farming. The new policy encouraged farmers to participate in new state-run farming corporations, or to turn their land over to private agricultural firms which would apply capital-intensive techniques to agricultural production. As one government agricultural official remarked, "Iran's small and relatively unproductive farmers are an extravagance that the country can no longer afford."[4] It was evident that a decade and a half after land reform was launched, Iran had been forced by economic imperatives to move away from the egalitarian land-to-the-tiller goals it had set for itself at the beginning. A major consequence of this policy shift was to accelerate rural migration to the towns.

Criticisms of Iran's land reform program are many and include these charges:

- Landless laborers received no benefit.
- Many landlords evaded expropriation of their best lands.
- Insufficient credit facilities were made available.
- Where the compulsory cooperativization was experimented with, government bureaucrats and engineers became the functional equivalents of the landlords, excluding peasants from the decisionmaking.
- Other government "technical aid" consisted of political indoctrination rather than agricultural assistance.
- The distribution of wealth in some villages was reversed because former tenants were now larger owners than previous small holders; this, as well as the competition with mechanized agriculture, exacerbated class tensions within villages.

- The new village councils and houses of justice rapidly became ineffectual because they were powerless to deal with higher levels of the bureaucracy.

- Where cooperatives were consolidated into experimental farm corporations, returns to the individual farmer were lower than in adjacent villages which had not been reformed.

- Richer peasants were buying out poorer peasants and creating a new, small landlord class. This process would be encouraged in any case by fragmentation through inheritance of small holdings. Also, no minimum wages, unemployment benefits, or gleaning rights were provided for the landless laborers.

Most telling of all in economic terms was that during the 10-year period from 1962 to 1972, agriculture had a growth rate of only 3.6 percent a year, and its share in the Gross National Product (GNP) fell from about 32 percent to 16 percent. This rate accelerated somewhat in the 1973–76 period but was still less than half the growth rate in the non-agricultural sectors of the economy.[5]

Government investment in agriculture and related projects such as dams and irrigation projects ran as high as 28 percent of the national economic budget. Farm corporations were formed in any village or group of villages where at least 51 percent of the landowning farmers voted for it. The government provided grants-in-aid to the corporations by furnishing machinery, farm equipment, fertilizer, and seeds at low prices. Credit facilities and technical assistance were also made available. The problems that arose stemmed from the lack of managerial expertise and the peasant farmers' reluctance to accept the loss of independence entailed in joining a corporation.

Rural cooperatives were also formed to give assistance to the subsistence farming sector. More than 2 million families

out of an estimated 3.5 million in the agricultural sector were brought under this system. The cooperatives provided a variety of services including credit, marketing, distributing consumer goods, and developing nonfarm activities. Because they were concerned with marginal farms, however, the cooperatives were not economically viable and marketed less than 1 percent of the value of agricultural output. Whatever productivity gains were achieved tended to be consumed by the producer in improving his own standard of living and that of his constantly expanding family. Further, because of the speed with which land reform was carried out, and the lack of adequate preparation beforehand, the peasants had little or no understanding of what was the meaning or purpose of the cooperatives. Members were ill-prepared to keep the books without supervision and little time was left for the training and education of members.

Overall, perhaps the greatest difficulty that the program encountered was the serious shortage of technical, managerial and organizational manpower. Large groups within the professional middle class refused to dedicate themselves to the program because they had no interest or commitment to its success. For example, although some 7,600 agricultural cooperatives had been established by the mid-1970s, there was a shortage of qualified managers and assistant managers of over 70 percent.[6] In many cases individuals were given 3-to-6-month training courses which were totally inadequate and inappropriate to the problems they were supposed to address.

While a few dedicated individuals could be found around the countryside, the majority in the land reform program devoted their efforts to seeking some means of parlaying their appointment to higher-paying, more prestigious jobs in the provincial capitals or, preferably, in Tehran. There were regular reports throughout the seventies of on-the-job failures of land reform officials and a number were removed from their positions and charged with misconduct, corruption, and incompetence. Not only Iranian reports but those of outside observers as well commented repeatedly on the severe

understaffing and lack of qualification of the government's agricultural extension service. The United Nations Development Project (UNDP) in its annual reports on its activities in Iran repeatedly made this point.

In terms of social justice, Iran's program of land reform—to give farmers the fruits of their own labor—was sound in concept, but it was flawed in implementation because of a number of institutional and human shortcomings. And in hindsight, its economic and political consequences were probably unforeseen. The question can be addressed more specifically by considering several broad objectives and what in fact occurred.

The first general premise of a developing economy is that it requires increased agricultural output to feed its population, to provide industry with raw materials, and to export in order to finance the import of capital goods. An attempt is usually made to counter the increase in demand and the shift of population away from agriculture by increasing productivity through improvements in cultivation methods, and the introduction of fertilizers and better-grade seed. As noted elsewhere, however, agricultural production in Iran lagged badly behind growth in other sectors of the economy. Following land reform and until the mid-seventies it grew at only about 3 percent annually—about even with the rate of increase in population. But when the rapid increase in income was combined with population growth, it fell badly behind demand. By the mid-seventies demand for agricultural produce was rising by 12.5 percent each year and was destined to go even higher.[7]

There were several reasons for the deficiency in agricultural output. One was the absolute limit on the expansion of cultivable land. Only about 30 percent of Iran's land can be tilled. A major constraint on the expansion of usable land was scanty overall rainfall and the inadequacy of surface and underground water systems. Although heavy investment was made in dams and irrigation systems (12 major ones completed during the time frame of this study), the total irrigated

area was raised only by about 800,000 hectares. Only about one-half of the water captured in Iran for irrigation is actually delivered. The other half is lost enroute because of leakage attributed to the primitive nature of existing diversion systems. The consequence of water shortage is that attention is focused on water-sparing crops with relatively low market values and with correspondingly low yields.[8]

Two-thirds of Iran's cultivated land is still dry-cropped. New landowners retained their antiquated and inefficient farming methods. To some extent, increased production was also consumed by the farmers and their ever-expanding families to improve their own standard of living. Finally, there was a relatively low priority of fixed capital formation in agriculture and inadequacy of price incentives. It was assumed that Iran's natural comparative advantage was not in agriculture, and that relatively cheap food could always be bought from the world's surplus countries against exports of higher valued industrial goods and oil. Indeed, in response to the shortage in domestic agricultural production and growing demand, food imports rose sharply, reaching near the $3 billion level in 1977 and expected to continue upward.

No reliable information is available as to what the food import bill has been with the advent of the Khomeini regime, but it is likely to be near the 1977 level, because the agricultural production situation has not changed. One of Khomeini's key charges against the Shah was that his land reform policy ruined Iran's agricultural sector and created a market for a massive invasion of foreign products. An objective view would suggest that he was wrong on the first count and right for the wrong reason on the second.

Another concept of economic development is that increased agricultural productivity will release labor to meet the demands of the urban sector. The problem is that often urbanization and industrialization prove to be capital-intensive, at least in the modern sector, and the demand for labor does not sufficiently correspond to decreasing employment opportuni-

ties in the agricultural sector. In Iran the percentage employed in agriculture did fall, from about 56 percent in 1956 to 33 percent in 1976. Nevertheless, because of overall population growth, the absolute number of people in agriculture actually rose. As an International Labor Organization (ILO) report in the mid-1970s noted, it would be necessary to create 1.5 million new jobs elsewhere in the economy over the forthcoming 5-year period just to avoid an increase in unemployment assuming there was no reduction in agricultural employment. In fact, Iran's efforts to increase productivity through mechanization, collectivization, and large, economy-of-scale farming did contribute to a declining number of farming employment opportunities. There is a discouraging "Catch-22" air about this situation which Iran, along with a number of other developing countries, has failed to solve.

While there is no doubt that a home market for any increase in agricultural production was created in Iran, there was not a concomitant expansion of demand in the rural economy for the products and services of the non-rural sector. One of the underlying assumptions of a transformation of the agrarian sector is that there will be an increased demand from it for improved agricultural inputs (such as machinery, chemical fertilizer, pesticides) and for consumer goods which the farmers will buy with their increased income.

In Iran there was an increase in overall production but, as already mentioned, also an increase in consumption by farmers. Income went for goods not manufactured by domestic industry. Secondly, because as high as 50 percent of the agricultural population did not receive land under the reform program, their incomes did not rise proportionally. Thus effective demand in the countryside was less than other parts of the economy required. As one assessment put it,

> Agricultural purchases from industry were 15 percent of its output, while industry purchases were about 30 percent of its requirements from domestic agriculture. The forward linkage with agriculture is very weak; industry

> does not supply agriculture with the inputs that are essential to its growth.[9]

This situation was obviously a constraint on the rate of real growth in the economy.

As noted earlier, one of the key objectives of breaking the feudal landlord-tenant structure of the society was achieved. This did not mean, however, that the old landlord class was simply swept aside. Some were able to conserve enough land to continue on as part of an enlarged rural elite. Others transformed payment for their land into industrial capital or urban commercial ventures. Yet others became part of the expanded government apparatus. The rules and means of the land reform program was not dispossession of landowners without offsetting compensation. In fact the process freed capital and entrepreneurial assets that might not otherwise have become available.

From a political point of view, one of the generally accepted assumptions about the need or value of agricultural reform is that it will bring stability, at least in the countryside. It is supposed to eliminate a possible revolutionary threat from a discontented peasantry. It also should help create a new propertied group which will be conservative in outlook and supportive of its government benefactor. While this may be true in the abstract, other complex forces may be set in motion to negate the presumed politically stabilizing effect of reform. For example, in Iran the newly-propertied farmers, to be politically effective, would have to develop economic leverage over other sectors of the society. But the government's policy of food price subsidies and massive food import programs, essential to maintain peace in the urban area, effectively prevented this from happening.

7.
THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL CHARACTER

There have been relatively few attempts to systematically assess from the outside the attitudes and values of Iranians, the norms of their culture, or the structure of their society, all of which affect the process of economic and political development and the specific successes and failures that attend the effort. Such assessment may be all the more important in societies such as Iran's, where institutions are not paramount and whose societal interactions determine the pace and direction of development.

One of the most thoughtful examinations of this complex question was conducted by Professor Marvin Zonis, who sought empirical evidence in confirmation of certain impressions with carefully constructed questionnaires. Three hundred personalities were studied whom Zonis felt represented the political elite of Iran, both in and out of power. He found that four characteristics stood out as particular marks of Iranian personality and behavior. These Zonis labeled "cynicism," "mistrust," "insecurity," and "interpersonal exploitation."[1] The Shah of Iran himself, in discussing the problems and obstacles confronting the nation in its efforts to modernize, found that the Iranian's individualism, penchant for dissemblance, unwillingness to work together, insensitivity to others, and lack of discipline all had to be overcome if Iran were to become a respected and progressive member of the community of nations.[2]

In 1964, the Institute of Social Studies and Research of Tehran University completed a detailed and documented study of Iranian government administration. It listed nine

problems that characterized administrators and administrative relationships. Among these were uncooperativeness, bribery, laziness, prevalence of influence-wielding, lack of respect for the people, and use of power for personal benefit. In their harshest light the Persians resemble the pre-social Hobbesian man "driven by his natural passions of which fear is uppermost, to preserve themselves against attack. Because of their all-pervading suspicions and distrust, they are unable to combine. They search for security in isolation or by getting their blow in first. In such conditions there is no place for industry because the fruits thereof are uncertain."[3]

The obvious question to ask at the outset is what caused a people to adopt a certain set of attitudes and to follow certain patterns of behavior. To the familiar answers—legacy, experience, environment, and example—one must add religion. In the case of Iran, it has shaped the world view of a majority of its people. As one respected Iranian scholar observed,

> The world view of the Persian is determined more than anything else by religion—the Persian is born, lives and dies with the verses of the Qur'an echoing in his ears—the universe in which the Persian lives is one that is created and sustained by Allah—who is at once the origin and end of all things. His will reigns supreme over both the world of nature and the lives of men and their societies. He has knowledge of all things and his majesty melts into nothingness all that is beside him. Yet he has given man free will to prove his own life and to choose the "right faith" on his own accord without compulsion. The secret of man's life lies between those two logically contradictory assertions.[4]

Islam teaches that in the nature of things, all is transitory, nothing is permanent, and the only ultimate reality is death and the hereafter. Repeated invasions, shifting national and personal fortunes, the vagaries of weather and climate all confirm and reinforce this general perception. The future is neither known nor to be trusted. It is a haphazard world, and safety is a dangerous illusion. Man has no choice but to toil as

best he can and wrest from life by artifice and craft what he can. The result is an exaggerated preoccupation with self: self-preservation and furthering one's own interests without particular concern for the consequence or effect on others.

The trait of individualism is manifest in virtually every aspect of Iranian behavior. Indeed, one is struck by the relative absence in Iranian life of meaningful and functioning groups other than family, with the important exception of the institution of the *dowreh*, or "circle" of associates. Iranian politics is not a process in which groups play an especially relevant role. Iranian political parties are primarily collections of individuals gathered about a prominent political activist or activitists for self-seeking purposes. From sports (aside from European-style football there are no team sports popular in Iran) to business to driving habits, the emphasis is on the assertion and glorification of the individual with no cooperation sought or given.

Whether one labels it pessimism, fatalism, or cynicism, a generally negative view of nature and man promotes the feeling that each individual must be constantly alert for opportunities to protect himself against malevolent forces that would otherwise be his undoing. Thus, there is a tendency to err on the side of cynicism. The simple are suspected of guile in politics, the crafty, suspect for their craft. The official who seeks to apply the abstract law without fear or favor walks a lonely and difficult path toward obscurity.

Foreigners, including this writer, learn that the Iranian finds it nearly incomprehensible that influence or bribery are neither required nor effective in obtaining whatever one wants. A foreigner's refusal to accept a bribe is not often thought commendable honesty, but evidence that one is holding out for a higher price or someone else. Bribes are not necessarily open offers of money—they can take many different and subtle forms; they are so deeply imbedded in Iranian mores that they may not be recognized for what they are. Of course other people, including Americans, are not innocent of such

maneuvers, such as the granting of honors and unearned awards, but it is the pervasiveness of it all that strikes one as being a particularly marked Iranian characteristic.

The Persian language is rich in terms and expressions that reflect this basic perception of how things are accomplished. *Parti, parti-bazi, dastah bandi,* and *zad-u-band* refer to levels and means of maneuvering and manipulating in order to improve one's own position. Translation into English often carries pejorative connotations not necessarily so regarded by Iranians. The most common of these expressions is *parti,* which means to have connections, to be able to pull strings, or to have "pull." In a well-known work on Persian literature, a sage Iranian is quoted as advising his son on how to succeed in Iran:

> Do not be afraid of abuse, humiliation or slander. . . . When kicked out of one door enter with a smile from another . . . Be impudent, insolent and stupid, for it is sometimes necessary to pretend stupidity—it helps. Try to establish connections with the holders of high office. Agree with everybody, no matter what his opinion is so that you may attract his utmost favor.[5]

The practice of *parti-bazi* is encountered at every hand and on every level. One of its most common manifestations is the use of an intermediary who is assumed to have power or influence. It is used to open doors, bring pressure to bear to obtain jobs, or to avoid unfavorable consequences of one's own actions. It is rare for an Iranian to approach someone unknown without first having laid the groundwork by asking a third party who is presumed to have some influence or prestige for a favorable note of introduction or a call to "explain" his case. Preferable, of course, is for the third party to influence the outcome favorably before-hand or, to put it another way, to have "greased the skids" so that the outcome is not in doubt.

Another manifestation of *parti-bazi,* which the foreigner not infrequently encounters, occurs in the case of a dispute

with an Iranian which is brought before Iranian authority. It is a general habit to blame the foreigner for any damage or loss that may have occurred and to disown any responsibility one's self. It is assumed that the foreigner has no "pull" and therefore is unlikely to be able to bring to bear the influence of powerful Iranian friends operating within the system. Conversely, when foreigners are preceived as having influence in one quarter or another, they are called upon shamelessly by Iranians to use this presumed influence on their behalf.

The concepts of bargaining and the use of intermediaries in the process are founded on religious beliefs. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr put it,

> Man is in need of an intermediary between himself and God. Even after the descent of a revelation, the role of the intermediary must continue. Therefore, after the Prophet of Islam there must be Imams who act as intermediaries between men of later generations and God.[6]

Even in the hereafter, a mediator is required. Assuming one passes the test of proving his belief in the unity of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the leadership of Ali, he must still find a mediator from the house of the Prophet to remit his sins. Nasr concludes that

> There is continuous "religious barter" in which Persians ask of god something in exchange for which they perform acts pleasing to him. One can hardly understand the psychology of the Persian and the tensions of hope and fear within him without understanding his attitude of the "barter" he makes continuously with the Creator.[7]

The Iranian is not noted for group activity. He promotes individualism and self-interest. Nevertheless, the *dowrehs*, or multipurpose friendship circles, exist at all levels. Most Iranian men belong to two or more *dowrehs*, usually a small group of about 15 members organized for some common purpose and meeting on a regular basis. There are *dowrehs* for card

playing, poetry reading, recreation and, most especially, for politics. The common interests and the satisfaction that their members receive from their association are at the root of the phenomenal prevalence of *dowrehs* throughout Iran. With few exceptions, *dowreh* members are all in the same generation and have had similar educational experiences. In some respects they can be likened to joint stock companies for the exploitation of political or economic opportunities that may come their way.

An effective political *dowreh* has its members in key spots throughout the political structure. With the assistance of these representatives, the power of almost all significant sections of that structure can be utilized for purposes of mutual welfare. If some members of the group are in while others are out of power, no one need suffer unduly. When one of the members of the long-established clique is elevated to a position of importance, fellow members can be called upon to fill other offices. Prime Ministers and key members of their cabinets have often come out of the same *dowreh*. Membership in a *dowreh* tends to serve as a fallback position and to offer a variety of points through which to deal with a variety of situations. It is, of course, a mechanism through which the aforementioned *parti-bazi* is exercised.

One of the principal objectives of belonging to an influential *dowreh* is to acquire a cover of security. Participation is assumed to enhance one's control over one's environment, and a sense of control is assumed to contribute to psychological security. Participation in a variety of organizations will enable a person to influence their activities for his self-interests.

In Iran, however, the deeply ingrained sense of insecurity not infrequently leads to self-defeat. As Islam instructs, man's destiny is ultimately in the hands of God. An Iranian knows, therefore, that he can never truly control destiny, and with this comes a feeling of impotence. Further, since neither man nor nature can be relied on, there is strong expectation of

betrayal. Thus, the Iranian finds himself in a bitter circle. As Andrew Westwood remarked,

> Expecting betrayal, they seek to balance alliances with contradictory alliances, thus fulfilling each other's prophecy of betrayal. To have lines of alliance in every possible direction so that no betrayal, no development, will leave one isolated and exposed is the ideal, but the quest for this ideal can leave all isolated and exposed.[8]

This feeling of mistrust—that nothing is as simple or straight-forward as it may seem—that nothing is to be taken at face value is revealed in a well-known story attributed to the archetypal Persian, Mulla Nasrudin, which has him instructing a porter to take his bag to his house. "May I be your sacrifice, Master," replied the porter, "and where is your house?" Nasrudin looked at the porter in astonishment and responded, "You are a disreputable ruffian, and probably a thief to boot. Do you think I am so simple-minded as to ever tell you where my house is?" Thus the feeling of mistrust feeds on itself. Iranians do not really prefer to be mistrustful, but since they have no basis for trust, they have no recourse but to protect themselves. Says the Iranian, "If I am trustful, I will only be taken advantage of, so it is foolish to be trustful."

The *dowreh* system has continued essentially unchanged and ubiquitous as an important nexus of social life second only to family. It has continued to be one of the important means of harmonizing conflicts and of promoting interests through informal, behind-the-scenes maneuvers. Indeed, *dowrehs* have been the refuge of students and intellectuals who felt that there were few other channels through which they could express their discontent and dissent.

Nevertheless, despite the timeless nature of the *dowreh* system, its place and impact on the social and political structure have undergone change in recent decades. This appears inevitable in light of the socioeconomic changes that have taken place under the drive toward modernization, which

includes centralization and growth of the government bureaucracy.

The growth of modern economic sectors has also created new sources of wealth and power, and modern management systems and principles have begun to make inroads on the traditional methods of doing things. This has come with the recruitment of younger men (often Western-educated) with the modern technical expertise required to operate and manage modern production and service systems. A consequence has been a growing generational, social, and economic gap as tension and conflict surface in the clash of modernism and traditionalism. Many a member of the younger, educated elite has been frustrated, isolated, and alienated as he attempts to operate in an environment which still conforms to the methods and practices of the past. As he has discovered, the passage to a modern state is a great deal more than making sound investment decisions and constructing an economic infrastructure.

For almost all Iranians, the reciprocal obligations and privileges that define relations between kinsmen, from the parent-child bond to more distant ones, are more important than those associated with any other kind of social alignment. Economic, political, and other forms of institutional activity are significantly colored by family ties, even if the nature of these activities is not necessarily determined by such ties. This holds not only for the biological family of parents and offspring, but also for the aggregate of kinsmen, near and distant, who, taken together, represent "the family" at its outermost boundary.

An influential family is one that has its members strategically distributed throughout the most vital sectors of society, each prepared to support the other in order to ensure family prestige and family status. The nepotism involved in this system has been a positive value to Iranians, not considered by them to be a corrupting factor. A man without family ties has little status in the society at large. If the tie is severed,

the consequence for the individual and his immediate dependents has some of the force of exile, reducing his security in a hostile world.

In the past, both religious and civil law supported and reinforced the integrity of the family. The head of the household—father and husband—exacted obedience and respect from others in the family. The religious law, without contradiction from civil law, defines a wife's relation to her husband as one of submission. In addition to wifely duties, a woman must help her husband maintain his status and, in effect, the family status. For example, the civil code specifies that the "husband may forbid his wife to accept a job that is degrading to him or her." Again, a father is the legal custodian of his children, whether or not he remains husband to the mother, and a daughter must receive her father's express permission to marry. While the same is not true with respect to a son, economic dependence often determines subordination. Dominance in the Iranian family is determined by age and sex—older dominates younger, male dominates female. Here also, modernization has come in conflict with tradition and religious dogma. The secularization and codification of law pertaining to personal and family matters, for example, were seen as a further erosion of clerical authority and an assault on sacred religious law.

One final word should be said about the family as the principal haven and protective force against outside hostile forces. It is a not uncommon belief that the family in Iran somehow represents a pattern of personal relations that defy conventional morality—that it is the "in-group" basis of trust. This is not necessarily the case. While it is doubtless true that members of a family have more trust in each other than in other units of social organization, there remains the strong tug of the underlying ethos of mistrust. Like cynicism, mistrust tends to affect all forms of relations. Whatever the nature of relations among minority groups, occupational associates, friends, or family members, Iranians carry with them their orientations. And in a majority of cases, the general

orientation is one of mistrust. Because of insecurity and uncertainty about what the future holds, there is an unwillingness to become too deeply committed to any one person or cause.

There are a number of defensive mechanisms the Iranians have developed to cope with the business of getting through life and adjusting to the impact of new and alien influences. Iranian identity is rooted in an illustrious past and a profound pride in things Persian; yet the future is taking a shape of ideas, habits, and technologies imported from outside that undermine, or render obsolete, traditional values. This arouses a latent chauvinism and xenophobia.

A sense of uniqueness becomes a shield behind which one can hide at a time of rapid cultural change. This sense of uniqueness derives from the view that Iran has been able to survive different waves of conquest and absorb cultural influences without having its own identity submerged. The most striking instance of cultural absorption was the Arab invasion and the introduction of Islam. Rather than adopt the full credo of Islam propounded by the Arab invaders, Iranians opted for a new branch, Shiism.

The sense of uniqueness also stems from a justifiable pride in the richness of past Iranian civilizations, of which there are still tangible signs, like the ruins of Persepolis, the mosques of Isfahan, or the sophistication of Iranian poetry at a time when Europe was emerging from the Dark Ages. Emphasis on this uniqueness used as a defensive mechanism against the encroachments of the West results in hyperbole and boastfulness.

At another level, this pride develops into an impatience with learning from foreigners and a refusal to admit mistakes. Impatient to learn and convinced they know best, Iranians frequently ignore detail and berate their foreign instructors. The greatest hindrance to the assimilation of new technology can be a refusal to admit ignorance. The shame of ignorance is very strong, but among Iranians the shame of being seen to

be ignorant is even stronger. The fear of loss of face through seeming ignorant is very marked throughout Iran; the corollary is a refusal to accept responsibility or blame.

When Iranian self-esteem is more seriously threatened, there is resort to chauvinism and xenophobia. The erosion of the close-knit family, the advent of permissiveness among the younger generation, the infiltration of overt sexual imagery through Western films, violence depicted in Western imported television, and the spread of Western pop music have all put Iranian culture on the defensive.

Some of the reaction to Iran's accelerated contact with the West has been purely xenophobic. It recently came to its fullest flower under Ayatollah Khomeini who, in a 29 October 1979 speech at Qom, said "All our problems come from America. All the problems of Muslims stem from America." Earlier, in a May 20th interview with *Le Monde*, the Ayatollah called US imperialism the greatest threat to Iran and blamed the CIA for trying to alter the anti-imperialist movement (of Iran). He also called the United States "a wounded snake." In a February 28th broadcast over Tehran radio, Khomeini declared that the expulsion of foreigners was one of the principal goals of the Iranian revolution and that the "Shah handed this nation over to foreigners, and we came under the economic, military and cultural domination of America."

Although this rhetoric is extreme, it reflects a general disposition within the Iranian psyche to shift blame (preferably to foreigners) and to see events as the result of conspiracies worked by powerful outside forces. No recognition is given to the participation of hundreds of thousands of Iranians in the affairs of their country or their willingness, even eagerly, to seek the accoutrements of Westernization now being so roundly condemned. It is this attitude which makes it so difficult for the Iranian to see other points of view or to interrelate the consequences of his own actions on the course of events.

Another Persian characteristic that has grown out of history and religion is the disposition to lie, sometimes for honorable or understandable reasons, sometimes for self-protection, and sometimes to advance one's own interests. *Tagiyah*, or religious dissimulation, permits a person to hide his religion or disavow certain religious practices to escape probable or definite danger of death from those who are opposed to his beliefs. Shiites cite the Qur'an and the behavior of the Prophet in the case of Amar ibn Yazir who pretended to turn away from Islam and to reaccept idol worship rather than face torture and death. The Prophet condoned Amar's actions and said that Amar had accomplished his duty. *Tagiyah* can also be practiced when not to do so would bring definite danger to the honor of the female members of the household or when a man could be made destitute as a result of avowing his beliefs.

Because of the persecution experienced frequently by Shiite Imams, the need for *tagiyah* has been continually reinforced by historical realities. Essentially the weapon of the weak against the strong, the practice was so widely accepted and so useful for self-protection in matters sacred that its use in areas of secular relations became widespread. The aphorism, "Conceal thy gold, thy destination, and thy creed," is one of a large number of similar caveats that are the stock in trade of the Persians. Early training in dissimulation has contributed to the basic sense of distrust so prevalent throughout their society.

But the notion of interpersonal relations characterized by mistrust appears to be especially important in connection with development not only in Iran but elsewhere. Summarizing much of the literature on national political systems, Sidney Verba notes that "unless lessons of political trust have been learned before demands for participation arise, such demands are likely to produce tension and fragmentation."[9] That mistrust and dissimulation are characteristic of the Iranians seems to be a near universal conclusion among students of

Iran. Mohammed Reza Pahlavi put it bluntly, "Persians lie."[10] He complained that lying is even glorified as a virtue, quoting what the Persian poet Saadi wrote:

> Words which beguile thee,
> But thy heart make glad,
> Outvalue truth
> Which makes thy temper sad.

Zonis reports that one well-known member of the Iranian elite observed that there is a great deal of upward mobility in Iran, but very few have made progress by talent alone. Rather, flattery, lying, and fraud must be one's tools. Another leader suggested that Iranians are like chameleons: they switch their colors every day and along with their colors, their policies. "We never feel we know another person's position or what he thinks, or how we can count on him. If a politician announces a policy, we do one of three things; either we don't believe it, we wait for him to change, or we ignore it."[11]

Another observer of the Iranian character recorded that it is characteristic for a man caught in the act of lying or cheating, far from showing embarrassment or resentment, to appear unconcerned and even show frank amusement. The man has lost a game, but why should he worry? Is he not really saying, "What kind of world is this in which I have to resort to such tricks in order to get my share?"[12]

Closely allied with this disposition is the practice of *taarof* which is an elaborate and ritualistic custom of greeting and salutation, of deferential behavior, of discourse and other forms of interpersonal behavior. Use of such phrases as "I am your slave" or "I am the dust under your feet" or "I kiss your foot a thousand times" are part of the standard vocabulary of everyday language. Visitors to one's home or even office are invited to "order" the host for "this home is yours, and I am your servant." Some of the more Westernized Iranians complain about its pervasiveness but still practice it themselves.

Honor and face-saving are components of the *taarof* system; thus, while an underling must recognize authority, he can retain his dignity. The use of *taarof* lessens the possibility of insult to one's self-respect. Iranians strive to avoid humiliation, and they may agree with another's statement merely to avoid embarrassment. Nevertheless, one encounters a constant stream of complaints about individuals (out of their hearing) and institutions. It is generally a gross social error to speak well of someone else in private, for it is unseemly to speak ill of someone present in public.

There is, of course, a kinder interpretation to be made of Iranian behavior which to some Westerners may seem to be exaggerated politeness, if not hypocrisy. The readiness with which Iranians give erroneous information instead of confessing ignorance often is a reluctance to disappoint. Even if the facts are known, they may not be given because they may be thought to be disagreeable or unpleasant for the recipient.

Or consider the classic business of barter or bargaining. Tricks are employed, passions are aroused, and since time is not expensive in the Iranian view, the business may go on for a long while. The object of the barter is almost forgotten and the wrestling of two egos becomes the principal purpose. Flattery is one of the tools of survival, and it is as much needed in the receiving as it is in the giving.

In sum, the Iranians have developed a highly complex, subtly-nuanced system which governs personal as well as public behavior, but underlying it all is a strong sense of self-preservation and a bias toward anarchy. If the constraining influences of authoritarianism as well as authoritarian leadership are weakened, there is a high probability that the social-political fabric will lurch toward disintegration. Recent history seems to amply demonstrate this conclusion. As a former high-ranking Iranian official, no great admirer of the Shah, recently told this writer, "Whether it comes from the right or the left, we Iranians cannot survive without a high degree of coercion from our leaders."

8.
CONCLUSIONS

By illustrating part of Iran's political-cultural legacy—how it shaped the character and behavior of its people, and how the process of change and modernization clashed with this legacy at several important points—I have tried to explain recent events in Iran. The dramatic growth of a middle class strengthened modernization even as loss of identity and disorientation of an increasingly literate population exposed to different political, economic, cultural, technological, and philosophical value systems weakened it. A growing gap between the rich and poor, even though income and the standard of living have improved in absolute terms for everyone, characterizes modern Iranian economic conflict. Frustration grew over the destabilizing forces which were unleashed in this conflict.

The crisis in Iran defies simple analysis. The obvious remains obvious. Change is unsettling. It creates different but equally intractable problems as it solves old ones. It borders constantly on the edge of the uncontrollable. It stimulates individualistic passions (and where they are already strong, tends to exacerbate them). It generates and fosters attitudes of confrontation, challenge, and dissatisfaction. Change undermines legitimacy and outruns human and social capacities to adjust without significant trauma and possible breakdown. Change is also inevitable.

One lesson seems apparent. The availability or insufficiency of financial resources may be an important factor regulating the pace of modernization, but it is not a prophylactic against its consequences. Indeed, there may be a correlation between the amount of money available through

unearned income such as oil or foreign aid and the degree of political and social instability it engenders. Easy money may not be the root of all evil. However, it enhances, multiplies, and magnifies the opportunities for and disposition toward corruption, waste, and inefficiency.

Humanitarianism, though perhaps not justifiable grounds for aid, should not be regarded as the appropriate response to apprehension about domestic or international disorder. In many ways humanitarianism adds fuel to the fire as a more healthy, literate population accelerates demands which an increasingly beleaguered government is unable to satisfy. Rising expectations promote neither admiration nor desire to emulate as much as they engender envy and resentment over present conditions. Revolution does not spring from the downtrodden and poverty-stricken, but from those who have gotten their feet on the ladder to upward mobility. Development brings an exponential growth in the demands and number of claimants on the never-large-enough pie of power, economic goods, and social standing. This is not a condition unique to just the Third World, but is universal in its applicability and prevalence.

Of what use are these conclusions to the US foreign policymaker? Because history and the evolutionary forces at large in the world will not be denied, retreat to isolationism and "fortress America" is not a realistic option. An idealistic belief in the brotherhood of man, his perfectability, and disposition to live in concord and harmony with fellow members of the human race should not be discarded as unworthy. It should, however, be viewed as an unreliable guide to the formulation and implementation of concrete international objectives and the selection of specific means to achieve them. Given the nature of the world and the human condition, we should deal with them as they are and not as we wish them to be. We must ponder whether our actions promote or undermine the objectives we seek.

In the realm of modernization, we must ask ourselves whether the manifest risks of promoting and facilitating change are outweighed by the general or specific benefits we can reasonably hope to gain. In the great game of world politics, we should abide by the ancient rule that we have no permanent friends or enemies; only permanent interests. Those interests, not sentiment or wishful thinking, should define our policies. Humanitarianism does have a place in all of this, but it is only one of several factors and should not be the heart of what drives our foreign policy.

To be specific in the case of Iran, our encouragement and praise of the Shah's modernization programs and our pressure for him to do more and better probably contributed to the acceleration of what may well have been inevitable: the demise of the monarchy. But need it have been so insistent and unremitting as to cause the forces of change to spin out of control and generate the backlash of anarchy, rejection, and hate?

The underlying objective of most developing countries is to build, insofar as possible, political and economic independence. The degree to which they can achieve this objective is a function of their political and economic development; this, in turn, depends on human resources. US responses to this ambition have been at best ambivalent.

Lying alongside the idealistic proposition that a more prosperous world and a more democratic world would redound to everyone's benefit are a set of contradictory specific policies or considerations. We want to see other countries increase food production, though not to the point of harming our own foreign food markets. We applaud improvements in foreign productivity, though not where it has an unfavorable impact on domestic production and erodes our competitive position in domestic and foreign markets. We are heartened by evidence that the political systems of other countries reflect a commitment to the democratic process and popular participation, but we are dismayed when those same countries ta e

positions on international issues counter to our own. We deplore intervention when it is our perception that our own national interests are threatened. None of this is remarkable in terms of the real world, but it introduces notes of uncertainty and inconsistency in what we do and why we do it that may not in fact serve our long-term interests.

To ask for certainty in human affairs may be unreasonable. Our political system, for example, is structured and operates in a manner that is inherently unstable insofar as policy is concerned. But granting this realization is not to argue that experience cannot be a guide to the shaping of policy for the future. Since emerging from isolation in the late 1930s, we have played a dominant role on the world scene. In the post-World War II period, we have experimented with a variety of approaches to evolving and shifting circumstances. Where we have dealt with political and economic systems that resembled our own we have encountered a considerable measure of success. But we have been less successful elsewhere, most particularly in the Third World. Does not, then, the case of Iran tell us something about the complexities and difficulties of modernization which we ought to heed?

Postmortems of the causes of Iran's collapse generally tend to focus on one or another specific issue such as the alleged corruption of the regime, the undemocratic ways of its rule, the effect of repression, or even the stress of too large a military buildup. Implicit is the assumption that a more democratic system (or a more honest or less ambitious one) would have caused a different outcome. No one will ever know, but there seems precious little historically to so assume. On the contrary, revolution and change through revolution seem more permanent and lasting features of the human condition than any others.

Can the process of change be controlled, manipulated, and forced to conform to predetermined lines and objectives? The answer must surely be that it is doubtful. In terms of the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy, then,

should not the closest attention be given the basics: national security and international peace? Should it not be recognized that beyond pursuing these goals there is little the United States can or should do to influence the outcome of the tides of change and "modernization" surging all around? How societies develop their values and priorities is a function of their own particular culture and tradition. Policymakers could do worse than reflect on these questions as they pursue what, after all, is a limited mandate—the protection and promotion of US national interests.

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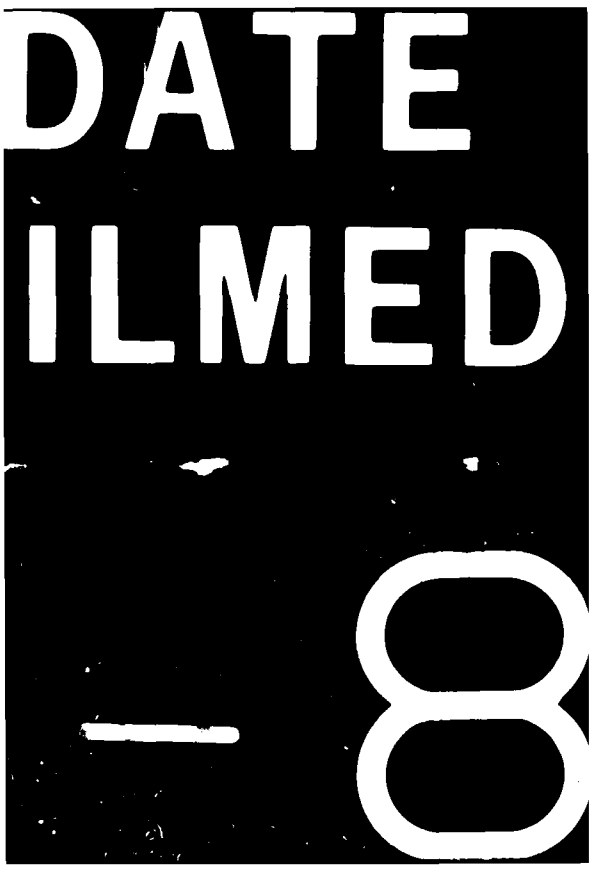
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